

Patient Information Leaflet

Direct Oral Anticoagulants - DOACs

What is a Direct Oral Anticoagulant?

Direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs) are drugs which prevent harmful blood clots forming in your blood vessels. They do this by slowing down the clotting process. They have a similar effect on thinning the blood as warfarin.

These drugs include Rivaroxaban (Xarelto©), Apixaban (Eliquis©), Dabigatran (Pradaxa©) and Edoxaban (Lixiana©).

What dose of DOAC should I take?

The dose varies from patient to patient and depends on why you require the anticoagulant. Your prescribing clinician will explain your dose in detail. How and when should I take my DOAC? We recommend you take your DOAC with food and a glass of water. These drugs are short acting so it is important you take them at the same time every day. If you take your medication twice a day, please make sure you take it every 12 hours, for example 8am and 8pm.

Are there any side effects associated with DOACs?

The main side effect of DOACs is unexpected bleeding or bruising. If you experience any of the following, please seek medical advice as soon as possible;

- prolonged nose bleeds (lasting more than 10 minutes)
- prolonged bleeding from cuts
- blood in stools or black stools
- blood in vomit or sputum (spit)
- blood in urine
- significant spontaneous bruising
- unusual headaches
- for women: heavy or increased bleeding during your period or any other vaginal bleeding

Some patients experience nausea, diarrhoea and/or heartburn. If these symptoms persist contact the surgery. Seek immediate attention if you suffer major trauma or a blow to the head, or are unable to stop bleeding.

How long will I need to take the DOAC for?

The length of treatment depends on the condition requiring treatment. The clinician will discuss this with you when you start the treatment. Some people need treatment for a short time e.g three months, while others will need to continue the DOAC indefinitely.

Are blood tests needed to monitor the DOACs?

DOACs do not require routine blood test monitoring. However, we recommend that your kidney function is checked prior to starting treatment and at least twice a year while on treatment.

What if I forget a dose?

Missing tablets will increase your risk of having a stroke, heart attack or another clot. If you are taking a DOAC once a day, please take it as soon as you remember and do not take more than one dose per day.

If you are taking a twice daily dose:

- If it is more than 6 hours to the next dose, please take your missed dose if it is less than 6 hours to your next dose, please miss out on the dose and take next dose at usual time.

What about taking other medicines?

Your medicines will be reviewed before you start a DOAC and any necessary changes will be made. As other medicines may interact with DOACs it is important you check with a pharmacist before starting/taking any additional medicines/herbal remedies or before stopping any existing ones.

Avoid taking any medicines that may increase your risk of bleeding, such as aspirin or ibuprofen, unless they are prescribed for you. If you need a painkiller, paracetamol and codeine are acceptable. Please let other healthcare professionals treating you know that you are taking a DOAC. This includes anyone who prescribes you medication or carries out a procedure, for example, your dentist.

Can I drink alcohol whilst taking a DOAC?

DOACs do not interact with alcohol. However, you should always drink in moderation and stay within the recommended guidelines.

DOAC check list

You should:

- ✓ report signs of bleeding and bruising
- ✓ have blood tests as requested by the surgery
- ✓ take your DOAC with food and a glass of water
- ✓ take the dose prescribed
- ✓ eat a normal healthy diet
- ✓ carry your anticoagulant alert card with you
- ✓ attend all medical review appointments

You should not:

- X take aspirin or medicines containing aspirin unless prescribed for you
- X miss a dose of DOAC unless advised by a clinician
- X take an extra dose of DOAC
- X run out of tablets. Always have a repeat prescription available.